



## The Overflow of Grace Week 1 | Grace

### | KEY THOUGHTS

- There is one meaning of the word “grace” in the New Testament: **God’s undeserved kindness toward us; His unmerited favor; a free gift.**
- **You can’t pay for it, nor trade for it. If you could, it wouldn’t be a gift.**
- This kind of grace rubs us wrong, because in our culture, we make our own way, get what we’ve earned.
- In the New Testament, a parable is a story that begins with a common point of reference, leading to an unexpected turn, and designed to elicit one specific response.
- In Jesus’s parable about the landowner...
  - The common point of reference is the landowner paying the laborers a wage for their efforts.
  - There are three unexpected turns: 1) the last are paid first; 2) the last to arrive are paid a full day’s wage; and, 3) everyone receives the same.
  - If this doesn’t bother you, you’re not paying attention!
- This parable exposes both the character of the laborers and the character of the landowner.
- **God’s grace is extravagant, not limited to our ideas of what’s right.**
- We might feel offended because it seems unfair; but this grace can be a source of humility and joy as we realize the weight of the gift.
- **God’s grace overflows from His character:** He maintained His holiness and perfect justice through Jesus’s death on the cross, and gives us forgiveness and access to real life.
- **God’s grace is His response to our sin:** we were dead in sin, and because of his great love, He brings us back to life.
- **God’s grace has an overflowing purpose:** He wants us to know Him, so we can marvel at His kindness, in order to draw people to Him and glorify Him in the ages to come.

## | SCRIPTURE

<sup>1</sup> “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ <sup>5</sup> So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. <sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ <sup>7</sup> They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ <sup>8</sup> And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ <sup>9</sup> And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, <sup>12</sup> saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ <sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. <sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first last.”

**Matthew 20:1-16 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

**Ephesians 2:4-7 (ESV)**

## | PRACTICAL

- What am I supposed to do with this amazing grace?
  - Enjoy it!
  - Realize it takes time for understanding of God's grace to grow and permeate me;
  - Ask the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to what this gift truly is;
  - Allow it to invade new areas of my life still in need of renewal.
- As the gospel of God's grace pours into me, God's grace will pour out of me in an overflow of a life affected by God; and that will draw others to Him.
- As we learn more about this grace, it will shed light on areas of pride in our lives.
  - This can lead to anger, defensiveness, or arguing with God.
  - Understanding grace puts a value on the sum of all our good efforts and self-directed work, showing it to be worth exactly \$0.00 in light of eternity.
  - We're all eleventh-hour workers; none of us deserve the wages He gives us.
  - As the light of God's grace illuminates our understanding, we learn that apart from Him, we grow ever more sinful; but we realize in the same instant that we have never been more loved.

## | REFLECT

- We cannot earn God's grace:
  - We cannot manipulate it to our favor by trying to live better lives;
  - We cannot lose it by failing to live up to God's standard;
  - It's a gift, undeserved, unearned, irrevocable.
- Failing to understand this gift can result in wrong judgment of others and ourself, which leads to legalism, which makes us miserable (to ourselves and others) and exhausted from trying to maintain a standard we can't keep.
- When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to what God's gift of grace truly is, judgment will release its hold on us and we can start to enjoy God.

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